

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 121005Z SEP 75
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3522
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 4001

EXDIS

DEPT ALSO PASS (AS APPROPRIATE) TO CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SN, ID

SUBJECT: SINGAPORE JUNGLE TRAINING CENTER IN BRUNEI

REFS: (A) SINGAPORE 3554; (B) SINGAPORE 3992

1. DEPUTY PM AND DEFENSE MINISTER GOH KENG SWEE CALLED ME TO HIS OFFICE AT NOON TODAY TO (A) REMIND ME WHAT HE HAD TOLD ME IN RECENT DINNER CONVERSATION CONCERNING PM LEE KUAN YEW'S INTENTION TO DISCUSS PROPOSED SINGAPORE JUNGLE WARFARE TRAINING CENTER IN BRUNEI WITH PRESIDENT SUHARTO IN BALI (REF-TEL A); (B) REPORT THAT SUHARTO HAD NOT SPOKEN AGAINST THIS CONCEPT AND GOS HAD THEREFORE REQUESTED UK CONCURRENCE VIA UK HIGH COMMISSIONER PETER TRIPP (REFTEL B); AND (C) ASK THAT U.S. BACK UP WITH FCO IN LONDON SINGAPORE'S REQUEST FOR UK CONCURRENCE.

2. GOH STATED THAT TRIPP HAD PERSONALLY BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF SINGAPORE CONCEPT OF JUNGLE TRAINING IN BRUNEI, BUT ALSO POINTED OUT THAT DECISION WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM LONDON. GOH INDICATED CLEARLY THAT HE ANTICIPATED SOME PROBLEMS IN LONDON AND, REMARKING THAT BRITISH WOULD PREFER TO KEEP EVERYTHING PEACEFUL IN THIS AREA OF THE WORLD, I.E., THEY WANTED TO AVOID TROUBLE WITH MALAYSIANS OVER BRUNEI.

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3. I ASKED GOH IF GOM HAD BEEN CONSULTED YET ON BRUNEI SCHEME, AND GOH REPLIED THAT PM RAZAK WAS BEING INFORMED RE GOS INTENTIONS. THIS WAS BEING DONE, PERHAPS TODAY, BY MEANS OF NOTE TO RAZAK WHICH WOULD BE DELIVERED BY SINGAPORE AMBASSADOR. GOH NOTED ALSO THAT THEY HAD TALKED TO BRUNEI GOVERNMENT, WHICH WAS "ALL RIGHT."

4. IN PROVIDING BACKGROUND ON BRUNEI JUNGLE WARFARE TRAINING CENTER, GOH WENT OVER SAME GROUND CONTAINED REFTEL (B) ON SINGAPORE'S ESTIMATION OF WORSENING SECURITY SITUATION IN MALAYSIA. ACCORDINGLY, HE SAID, IF MALAYSIA COULD NOT BE RELIED UPON TO PROTECT SINGAPORE'S SECURITY INTERESTS, SINGAPOREANS WOULD HAVE TO DO IT FOR THEMSELVES. AT THE VERY LEAST, SINGAPORE WOULD NEED TO PROTECT ITS WATER SUPPLY.

5. ACCORDING TO GOH, GOS IS NOT INTERESTED IN USING BRITISH JUNGLE WARFARE TRAINING FACILITIES IN BRUNEI BUT WILL WANT TO SET UP OWN SEPARATE SCHOOL. REASON IS THAT ROTATION SCHEDULE OF FIVE UK BATTALIONS (4 IN HONG KONG AND ONE IN BRUNEI) WOULD CLOG UP FACILITIES AND MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOS TO FIT IN THE EIGHT BATTALIONS WHICH THEY INTEND TO TRAIN. GOS PLANS TO PROGRAM FOUR BATTALIONS PER YEAR TO BRUNEI.

6. ONCE AGAIN GOH MADE IT PLAIN THAT SINGAPOREANS BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN LET DOWN BY PM RAZAK ON GOS USE OF MALAYSIAN JUNGLE WARFARE TRAINING CENTER. GOH STATED THAT DURING JAMAICA CONFERENCE LEE KUAN YEW AND RAZAK HAD AGREED ON PROGRAM OF JOINT COUNTERINSURGENCY TRAINING, INCLUDING GOS USE OF MALAYSIAN JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL, AND JOINT COUNTERINSURGENCY SEMINARS IN THE U.S. GIVEN BY U.S. EXPERTS TO POINT UP WHAT LESSONS U.S. HAD LEARNED IN VIETNAM. IT WAS ON THIS BASIS THAT LEE QUAN YEW HAD ASKED FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE, OUT OF WHICH CAME SHACKLEY/CROWE MISSION. HOWEVER, AFTER RETURNING TO MALAYSIA FROM JAMAICA AND NEW YORK, (WHERE SINGAPOREANS BELIEVED RAZAK HAD SPOKEN FAVORABLY TO U.S. OFFICIALS ON COOPERATION IN COUNTERINSURGENCY TRAINING WITH SINGAPORE) RAZAK HAD BEEN EVIDENTLY TALKED OUT OF JOINT EFFORTS BY MALAYSIAN GENERALS AND GHAZALI SHAFIE. GOH ASSUMED THAT THESE PEOPLE AROUND RAZAK FELT GOM HAD SECURITY SITUATION MILITARILY WELL IN HAND, AND THAT COOPERATION WITH SINGAPORE THEREFORE NOT NECESSARY.

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7. IN RESPONSE TO GOHS REQUEST THAT U.S. MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO FCO ON SINGAPORE'S BEHALF, I SAID THAT I WOULD INFORM WASHINGTON SOONEST. I TOLD GOH THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO U.S. IN THIS REGARD IF PM RAZAK WERE TO COME OUT WITH FAVORABLE RESPONSE TO GOS LETTER OR AT LEAST TAKE POSITION WHICH WOULD NOT BE IN ACTIVE OPPOSITION. I REMINDED GOH THAT SINGAPORE TRAINING OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT UNITS IN BRUNEI HAD ALREADY BEEN

SUBJECTED TO MALAYSIAN PRESS CRITICISM IN NEWSPAPER IDENTIFIED WITH UMNO.

8. COMMENT: IT IS EVIDENT THAT SINGAPOREANS FEEL VERY STRONGLY ABOUT JUNGLE WARFARE CENTER, AND IN FACT REGARD IT AS KEY ELEMENT IN THEIR DEFENSIVE STRATEGY GIVEN AGSENCE OF TRAINING SPACE LOCALLY AND (TO THEM) DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION IN MALAYSIA. WITHOUT IT THEY WILL FEEL HELPLESS, UNLESS, OF COURSE, THEY GAIN ACCESS TO MALAYSIAN JUNGLE WARFARE TRAINING FACILITIES. HOPEFULLY SOMETHING CAN BE WORKED OUT WHICH WILL SATISFY THEM, BUT WHATEVER HAPPENS I STRONGLY BELIEVE US ROLE SHOULD BE POSITIVE. OTHERWISE WE WILL SHARE THE ONUS, AND OUR INTERESTS IN SINGAPORE AND REGION AS A WHOLE WILL SUFFER ACCORDINGLY.
HOLBRIDGE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CINCPAC.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONNEL TRAINING, MILITARY PERSONNEL, MILITARY ADVISERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SINGAP04001
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750317-1013
From: SINGAPORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750957/aaaabykp.tel
Line Count: 131
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 SINGAPORE 3554, 75 SINGAPORE 3992
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <10 NOV 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SINGAPORE JUNGLE TRAINING CENTER IN BRUNEI
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SN, ID, (GOH KENG SWEE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006